

His gaze is always fixed on details of JFK's death

By Rich Henson
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By day, Robert Groden works in the laboratory of a Wayne photographic firm, performing specialized processes on photographs and films.

But give him a spare moment and his obsession takes over: The assassination of John F. Kennedy. Details. Details. Details. Groden can close his eyes and see all the details.

Since the release of the Warren Commission report in 1964, the Boothwyn, Delaware County, man has spent part of virtually every day reviewing the Kennedy shooting.

From memory he can recite the names of more than 100 people who were in Dealey Plaza in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963, the day Kennedy was shot. He knows the ballistics, the bullet trajectories, the doctors' reports, the floor plans, the autopsy reports and the statements of hundreds of people interviewed after the shooting.

A self-taught industrial photogra-

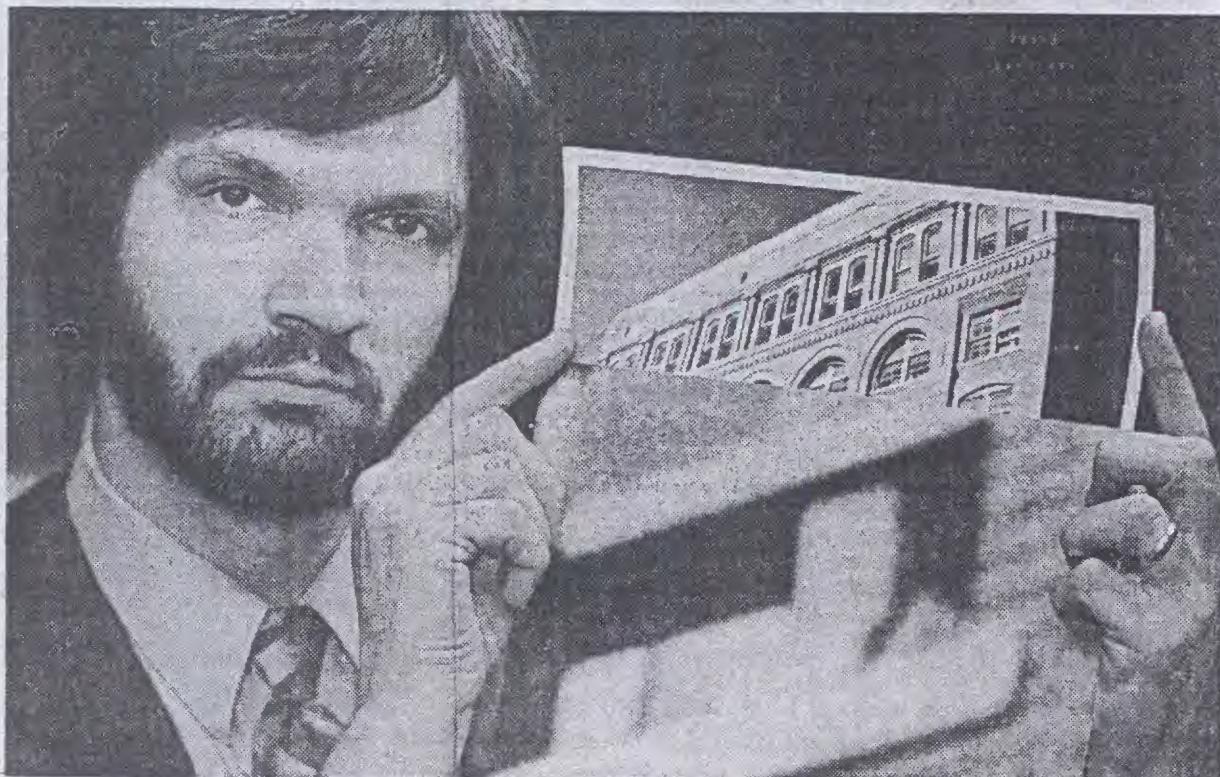
pher, he has collected and analyzed more than 2,000 snapshots and a half-dozen films, from which he can re-create a fascinating moving portrait of what occurred before, during and after the shots rang out. He has 23 file cabinets packed with information about the assassination. He has spent more than \$45,000 of his own money trying to get others to conclude — as he did — that Lee Harvey Oswald did not act alone, probably didn't even fire a shot.

He has published one book on the shooting and has completed the manuscript for his second. He estimates that he's done more than 100 TV, radio and newspaper interviews.

Tomorrow, Groden will be the keynote speaker at a conference at the University of Pittsburgh called "The Kennedy Assassination: A Critical Review," which marks the 25th anniversary of the Kennedy shooting.

For Groden and his wife of 23 years, Christine, the assassination

(See JFK on 4-B)



Groden holds two photos of the book depository, taken seconds after the shooting. The

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bottom photo is a blowup that Groden says shows an image of a man other than Oswald.

JFK, from 1-B

has been all-consuming. "My wife has been with me on this from the beginning," Groden said. "We've worked side by side, and it's made our marriage better."

The Grodens' four children — three boys and a girl ages 9 through 15 — are arguably the most versed siblings on the Kennedy shootings in the world. At the end of a three-hour Groden lecture at Villanova University earlier this week, the youngest child was fast asleep in his seat as midnight drew near while the other three were more than eager to discuss their conspiracy theories.

"Each of the kids has their own ideas on who shot John Kennedy," said Groden, who named two of his sons, Robert and John, after the Kennedy brothers.

"President Kennedy represented to me the best of what a president should be," said Groden, who will celebrate his 43rd birthday on Tuesday, Nov. 22. "He was the only presi-

dent in our time who truly tried to make the Constitution live. That may sound very flag-waving, but I think that's the way things should be. I turned 18 years old on the day Kennedy died. I lived through this wonderful time that he had created in this country."

Bespectacled, with shaggy brown hair and pants pulled high above the waist, Groden looks as if he should have a plastic pocket-protector full of ballpoint pens. Actually, he said, he's more of a "liberal, free-thinking scientist."

"I wasn't exactly a hippie," he said of his days in the 1960s, "although I liked some of the things they were into. There was a lot of disorder in their lifestyle and I can't handle things disorganized. I like order. I believe there is a universal truth in the world, and if there is a disturbance in the middle of this truth, then it is like a cancer growing that has to be stopped."

When the Warren Commission report was released 10 months after the

assassination, Groden said, he believed its conclusion: that Lee Harvey Oswald, acting alone, fired three shots and killed Kennedy.

Two years later, however, Groden said, he read two books questioning the commission's findings and his life work began.

He started collecting and analyzing anything about the shooting he could find. He interviewed witnesses. In 1966, while working for a photographic firm in Manhattan, Groden said he was able to obtain access to the original copy of the famed Zapruder film, which shows Kennedy being struck by gunfire. The film had been kept under tight security by the FBI. Using techniques he developed himself, Groden cleared up the blurs and slowed down the motion.

"I called newspapers, the major wire services like AP and UPI, I called CBS, I called everybody, but no one seemed interested," he said. "You have to remember, America had not yet seen this film. Bits and

pieces of it had been shown, but not the whole thing."

Groden took what he had found on the road, lecturing at colleges and wherever he could get an audience. Finally, in 1975, TV personality Geraldo Rivera returned Groden's phone call and agreed to show the Zapruder film on his show, *Good Night America*. On the show, Groden pointed out what he said were discrepancies between the film and what the Warren Commission report said had happened.

Two days later, Thomas Downing, then a congressman from Virginia, asked Groden for a private showing. Downing and a handful of other congressman then pushed to reopen the investigation. The House Select Committee on Assassinations was formed and Groden was named photographic consultant.

"I remember being thrilled that we had finally gotten the ball rolling," Groden said. After 2½ years of hearings, the House committee concluded

in 1979 that there was a 95 percent probability that Oswald and another unknown person had shot at the president. For Groden, the conclusion was only a partial victory.

"The report just didn't go far enough," Groden said. "There was a lot of evidence out there pointing to individuals who could have been responsible, but the committee didn't seem interested in pursuing those leads."

At the Pitt conference, Groden will show two previously unreleased photographs, taken seconds after the shooting, that he contends show the faces and figures of two people in windows on the sixth floor of the Texas School Book Depository, the same floor that Oswald allegedly fired from.

"If other people were up there," Groden said, "then Oswald did not act alone."